

HN  
64  
.S5  
1906

AUX  
STOR  
1

# Class Struggles in America

15097  
Class Struggles in America  
1906



# Class Struggles in America

---

---

By A. M. SIMONS

"In every historical epoch the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that epoch; and consequently the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; thus the history of these class struggles forms a series of evolution in which, now-a-days, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class—the proletariat—cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class—the bourgeoisie—without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class-distinctions and class-struggles."  
—Communist Manifesto.

PRICE TEN CENTS

350.973

CHARLES H. KERR & COMPANY  
PUBLISHERS - - - CHICAGO

Si 57c

THE LIBRARY  
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY  
PROVO, UTAH

30.973  
i 57c

# CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

BY

A. M. SIMONS

REVISED AND ENLARGED



CHICAGO  
CHARLES H. KERR & COMPANY  
CO-OPERATIVE

## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

---

AMERICAN HISTORY BEGINS IN EUROPE.....	7
IN THE COLONIES.....	8
CAUSES OF THE REVOLUTION.....	9
CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASS UNDER "INDEPENDENCE".....	11
THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION.....	12
RULE OF MERCHANT AND TRADER.....	15
CONQUEST OF POWER BY PLANTER AND PIONEER.....	16
THE MARCH OF THE PIONEER.....	18
THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.....	20
THE MOMENTARY TRIUMPH OF THE FRONTIER.....	24
WAGE VS. CHATTEL SLAVERY.....	25
THE STRUGGLE FOR THE NORTHWEST.....	28
RISE OF THE CAPITALIST CLASS.....	32
SECESSION .....	34
THE CIVIL WAR.....	35
INDUSTRIAL EFFECTS OF THE WAR.....	36
WORKINGMEN DURING THE WAR.....	40
RECONSTRUCTION .....	41
THE RISE OF PLUTOCRACY TO POWER.....	43
NEGRO ENFRANCHISEMENT .....	45
THE GROWTH OF THE GREAT INDUSTRY.....	48
THE RISE OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT.....	50
THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE.....	52
PANIC OF 1873.....	53
THE STRIKE OF 1877.....	54
THE RISE OF THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR.....	56
THE AGRARIAN REVOLT.....	59
THE LITTLE CAPITALISTS' FINAL FIGHT.....	60
LATER STAGES IN CONCENTRATION.....	61
THE LAST CLASS STRUGGLE.....	63

COPYRIGHT, 1903, BY CHARLES H. KERR & COMPANY.

COPYRIGHT, 1906, BY CHARLES H. KERR & COMPANY.

THE LIBRARY  
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY  
PROVO, UTAH

## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

---

In re-writing this booklet little more than the name has been preserved from the previous edition. This was not because of errors in the former writing or changes of opinion, but rather because the mass of material gathered since the earlier publication made it possible to present many matters which were still uncertain at the previous period and to more accurately set forth some facts only touched upon before.

Whether consciously or not every writer upon historical topics adopts some philosophy of social development and writes from the standpoint of some social class. He must do so if his work is to be anything more than a mere chronology, and even then the selection of events to be chronicled will be influenced by his attitude of mind and theory of society. Therefore I make no apology for having consciously written from the point of view of the working class, or for my belief that the socialist philosophy of history offers the true key to the progress of events. This philosophy is succinctly expressed in the quotation upon the cover of this booklet in the statement that all history is the "history of class struggles".

Since the appearance of private property some one social class has always owned and controlled the instruments by which wealth was produced and distributed. This class by virtue of its ownership become

## PREFACE

the social ruler and fashions social institutions in its interest.

The methods of producing wealth are always changing. Chipped stone gave way to polished and this in turn to bronze and iron tools, and these were finally displaced by the complex machine. As a result hunting and fishing were followed by agriculture and this in turn by manufacture as the basis of social production.

These changes in the method of wealth creation constantly rendered the owner of outgrown methods superfluous and brought new classes of owners to the front. The struggles between these outgrown and the coming social classes have made up the great revolutionary class struggles that accomplished fundamental social transformations. Along with these larger conflicts went minor struggles between classes having more or less divergent economic interests as to details. These formed political parties, factions and divisions, the story of which makes up the great mass of history.

Each social stage contains as a part of its intellectual and institutional fabric much that is inherited from previous environments. These idealistic influences often play a great part in determining the course that society shall take. They are the material upon which each new social stage must work in building up a form of society suited to its needs. If these inherited ideas and institutions are not adapted to social progress, in the sense of a better control of environment, then they will either disappear or social evolution will be checked.

This view of history imputes no moral condemnation to the commercial, financial and manufacturing interests, because they violently seized upon social power in dif-

## PREFACE

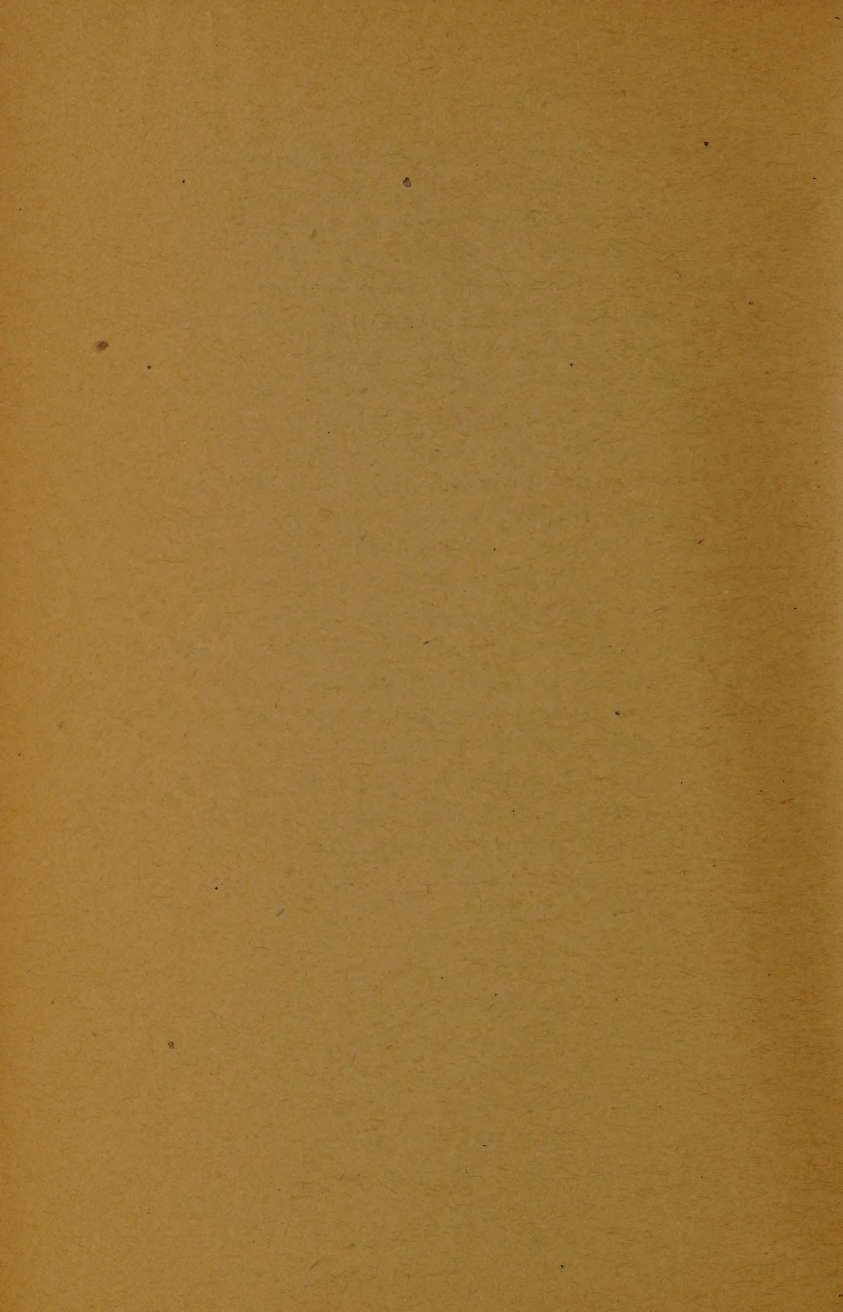
ferent periods of their history. At these times their accession to rulership seems to have been necessary to further the higher evolution of society which we call progress.

If, today the institution of private property and the further rulership of monopolized capitalistic interests is not in accord with the best development of the social whole; and if this institution and class are retained through the power of ideological impressions inherited from a time when they were socially essential then progress will cease and stagnation, or worse, result.

Such is the lesson which I read in American Industrial History and which I believe the facts set forth in the following pages will justify. As to the reliability of the statements there made I can only say that they rest almost exclusively on the evidence of contemporary documents. I had at first planned to include references to these as foot notes, but as their number soon mounted into the hundreds it became evident that this was impossible without extending this booklet to many times its present length. I can only say that I shall be very willing to supply any inquirers with references to any specific points whose accuracy is challenged.

A. M. SIMONS.

*Chicago, Ill., November, 1905.*



## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

---

American History begins in Europe. The thread of events connecting the American life of today to the distant past runs through Spain, England, France and Italy back to Greece and Asia and not through Sioux, Iroquois and Pequod back to mound builders, and pre-historic residents of the American continent. It is in Europe that the germs and sometimes the developed forms of the institutions which make up our present society have their roots.

At the time of the discovery of America a new social class was struggling into power in Europe. Clergy and nobility with priests, knights and kings had ruled for centuries. They were soon to be overthrown by the rising class of traders. New inventions, bringing about changes in the methods by which men satisfy their wants, were creating this new class and carrying it into power, as they have ever created new classes and led them to victory.

Gunpowder had destroyed the knight's monopoly of military skill; printing had abolished the monopoly of learning hitherto vested in the monks and a chosen few of the nobility, while the mariners' compass had broken the narrow circles of trade and released the voyagers from their confinement to land marks.

As the trading class struggled into power it changed its location. The kingdom of trade had long had its capital in the cities of the Mediterranean. The great

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

trade routes of the time ran through the Red Sea or over land to the north to China, India and Japan. Over these routes came spices, silks, rugs, wines and precious jewels for the gratification and adornment of the social rulers of that day. These came to Genoa and Venice to be distributed over the remainder of Europe. But the Moslem was cutting one after another of the trade connections along which these Oriental luxuries flowed to the Mediterranean cities. Everywhere the traders were calling for a new route to India.

During the 14th and 15th centuries the seats of trade began to move north and west. The Hanseatic league of powerful cities arose on the shores of the Baltic. Manufacturing, especially the weaving of woolen, moved across the English channel. This moving of the commercial centers to the Atlantic had turned the face of Europe westward.

The voyage around Gibraltar between these Hanse cities and Italy required the building of larger and more powerful ships, which made ocean navigation possible. Some of these vessels under the command of Portuguese navigators were creeping around the coast of Africa seeking for a route to India. The rotundity of the earth was generally accepted by navigators, at that time, although most of our school histories state the reverse. In the midst of this age of discovery Columbus' voyage was but an incident, but one of a host of adventurous voyages, some one of which was sure sooner or later to land on an American coast.

### IN THE COLONIES

During the first few years of settlement man bulked small compared with the untrodden continent, and

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

geographical conditions were of more importance than industrial in determining social institutions. The northern climate, land locked bays, abundant forests, convenient fishing grounds and swift flowing rivers decided that New England should be the seat first of a ship building and fishing, and later a manufacturing population. The central states with their deep harbors and abundant minerals pointed the way first to agriculture, then to manufacturing. The south with its torrid sun, rich soil, and few discovered minerals was especially fitted for cotton, rice, tobacco, plantations, and chattel slavery.

Soon, however, there arose a division into social classes. Along the coast was the manufacturing, trading, plantation, creditor class; in the back country the toiling small farmer, hunter, pioneer, the conqueror of a continent, always hopelessly indebted to his economic masters on the oceans' brim.

The pioneer debtor class desired free land, low taxes, and most of all paper money. The creditor coast class insisted on restriction of land sales, taxation and metal currency.

Sometimes this struggle between the back country and the coast took on a violent form, as in "Bacon's Rebellion" in Virginia, and Leisler's in New York. But the powers of the government were in the hands of the coast and these early rebellions were soon crushed. The commercial and plantation classes of the sea-board reigned supreme.

### CAUSES OF THE REVOLUTION

Commerce, fishing and even manufacturing grew rapidly during the 17th century. Then the English trading and manufacturing class under Cromwell secured control of the British government and began to interfere

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

with the profit taking of their fellow traders in America.

The great majority of American colonial merchants were smugglers or slave traders or both. Says Sydney G. Fisher in his *True History of the American Revolution*: "If we could raise from the mud \* \* \* \* any one of our ancestors' curiously rigged ships \* \* \* we would be tolerably safe in naming her 'Smuggler.'"

Here and there were to be found the germs of manufacturing. Settlement was pushing back from the coast. Society was differentiating and production had progressed to the point where the colonies were to a large degree industrially independent of England.

By the beginning of the 18th century the English were attempting to enforce the laws against smuggling. At the same time they passed laws forbidding the growth of manufacturing in the colonies. Yet on the whole this attempt at enforcement was not successful enough to prove anything more than an annoyance to the shrewd smugglers of New England. The tariff on tea never bothered the colonists until the English export tax was remitted. This made it possible for the East India Company, a semi-governmental institution in which the king and most of the court favorites were closely interested, to deliver tea in Boston harbor, tariff and all, cheaper than the American smugglers could sell it. This abolished the profit and when the profit disappeared, smuggling was most effectually prohibited. Then it was that the oppressed smugglers arose and held the Boston Tea Party.

John Hancock only avoided prosecution as a smuggler because the Concord massacre took place on the day for which his trial was set.

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

At still another point the interests of the ruling class in America were interfered with by the British government. Parliament and the crown sought to limit settlement to the sea coast, since so long as the colonies were confined to a narrow strip along the Atlantic sea-board they must be dependent on the mother country. Moreover, settlement interfered with the fur trade in which English capitalists were heavily interested. But a large portion of the "Fathers of Our Country" were interested in western land speculation. Washington had used his position as Royal surveyor to illegally survey lands outside the royal grant; while Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton and Robert Morris were land speculators on a large scale.

In spite of these causes for dissatisfaction among the ruling class it was difficult to arouse the great masses of the people who, indeed, had no particular reason for rebellion since their condition was about the same whether King or President ruled over the country. Indeed it is agreed by the best authorities that at the outbreak of the Revolution only a minority were in favor of rebellion, and that at no time save at the very close of the war was there a majority which really cared about independence. But social progress demanded independence. The interests of this minority accorded with the forces of social evolution. Therefore they were united, coherent, class-conscious, and won.

### CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASS UNDER "INDEPENDENCE"

When the war came on, however, it was the laborers who did the fighting, as they have in all the wars before or since the Revolution. When they had at last

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

gained the victory, after having shed their blood and suffered untold miseries from Lexington and Valley Forge to Yorktown, they found, as the fighters of all other wars have found that the triumphs gained were not to be shared by their class.

"One-half the community was totally bankrupt, the other half plunged in the depths of poverty. The year which had elapsed since the affair at Yorktown had not brought all the blessings that had been foretold \* \* \* \* \*. It was then the fashion in New Hampshire, as indeed it was everywhere, to lock men up in jail as soon as they were so unfortunate as to owe a fellow a six pence or shilling. Had this law been rigorously enforced in 1785 it is probable that two-thirds of the community would have been in prison."\*

Throughout the war the fighters and the workers had been compelled to borrow from the commercial and financial classes of the seaports. These debts had been contracted in prices fixed by continental currency. Now it was proposed to collect them in gold. State debts and national debts were added to private indebtedness until for once in the world "the lawyers were overwhelmed with cases. The courts could not try half that came before them." To collect these debts, to lay a tariff for the benefit of the manufactures that had sprung up during the war, to give bounties to the fisheries and to make commercial treaties with other countries, the ruling class needed a strong national government.

### THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Throughout the war there had been a tendency toward centralization, yet at the close there was nothing which approached a real national government. There was no

---

\* McMaster's "History of the American People."

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

way in which this could be legally procured. But ruling classes have always been above the law, so a convention which had been called at Annapolis to settle some questions concerning the navigation of the Potomac, and which had no more law-making power than any trades union convention which might be called to order tomorrow, proceeded to issue a call for a national constitutional convention. Later this call was endorsed by the now well nigh dead Continental Congress. There is no doubt however but what it would have gone on just the same had this latter formality been lacking.

While only a very small minority were interested in forming a constitution, yet that minority, as in the time of the Revolution, formed the class which was essential to social progress if capitalism in America was to reach the developed form which would alone enable it to give birth to the better society that shall follow. But this should not deceive us into believing that the constitution was in any way democratic in its origin, or that it was anything else than a straight business proposition. The convention was simply a committee representing the commercial and manufacturing classes of the northern and middle states and the southern plantation interests.

"The delegates to Annapolis and later to Philadelphia were brought together in response to the demands of the business men of the country, not to form an ideal plan of government, but such a practical plan as would meet the business needs of the people."

The northern and the southern capitalists did not entirely agree on details. The main differences in the constitutional convention gradually narrowed down to the question of tariff and the importation of slaves. The bargain as finally struck permitted the importation of

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

slaves until 1808 in exchange for the right to impose a protective tariff. Just how much any humanitarian motives had to do with the northern opposition to slavery is seen from the following quotation from a speech which Mr. Ellsworth of Connecticut made in the constitutional convention: \* \* \* \* \* "Let us not intermeddle, as population increases poor laborers will be so plenty as to render slaves useless." While John Adams declared his opinion in a speech in the Continental Congress that,

"It is of no consequence by what name you call your people, whether by that of freeman or of slave. In some countries the laboring poor men are *called* freemen, in others they are called slaves, but the difference is imaginary only. What matters it whether a landlord employing ten laborers on his farm gives them annually as much as will buy the necessities of life or gives them those necessities at short hand."

When the constitution was finally formulated by this little group of wage and chattel slave owners the question of its adoption by the states came up. Many people are under the impression that it was adopted by a majority vote of the population. The fact is that "There were probably not more than one hundred and twenty thousand men who had the right to vote out of all the four million inhabitants.\*

Even these few citizens were not allowed to vote directly, but were only permitted to choose delegates to conventions, so that in the end it was once more a very small minority which ruled. The effect on the country of the adoption of the constitution is described by McMaster as follows:

---

\* Woodrow Wilson's "History of the American People" III:120.

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

"All who possessed estates, who were engaged in traffic, or held any of the final settlements and depreciation certificates, felt safe.

"The multitude, however, were indifferent. That great mass of the community whose lot it was to eat bread in the sweat of their face thought it a matter of no importance whether there was one republic or three, whether they were ruled by a monarch or governed by a senate. So long as the crops were good, wages high and food cheap, the sum of their happiness was likely to be much the same under one form of government as under another."

The vote on the constitution clearly brought out the lines of the first political class struggle in America. The small farmers, frontiersmen,—debtors, voted solidly against the constitution, while the commercial, financial and plantation classes of the cities and the sea-board settlements voted in favor of its adoption.

### RULE OF MERCHANT AND TRADER

During the early years of American government Europe was convulsed by the Napoleonic wars. The merchants of the United States had unexcelled opportunities to monopolize the merchant marine, and by 1807 American ships were carrying the larger portion of the trade of the world. The commercial and financial class of New York and New England were therefore able to dominate the government.

Under Alexander Hamilton they proceeded to destroy what few traces of democracy had been permitted to enter the constitution. Hamilton declared it to be his object to form an alliance between the government and the capitalist class and he succeeded in doing this thoroughly. The doctrine of "implied powers" was used to extend the functions of the central government,—some-

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

thing very much in the interest of the then ruling classes. The national debt was funded, the state debts assumed by the national government, and preparations made to pay both in full. This payment was to be made in currency at par value, although the securities were largely in the hands of speculators, who bought them for some times one-tenth their real value.

A protective tariff was the first bill passed by the new congress after organization, and a national bank charter, and a measure providing for the survey of the lands held by the speculators previously described followed soon after.

An internal revenue tax upon whiskey, the only form in which the western settler could export his corn, served to bring the power of the national government to bear directly upon the citizen without the interposition of the state governments. When this tax was resisted it also offered an excuse for setting in motion 15,000 troops under the national government to suppress an "insurrection" of less than as many hundred settlers. This established the precedent of the right of the national government to use troops directly against citizens.

### CONQUEST OF POWER BY PLANTER AND PIONEER

While the shipping, fishing and banking interests of New England and the central states grew with ever increasing rapidity during the first decade of the 19th century, yet their rivals for power grew even more rapidly. The plantation interests of the South, also aiming at control of the national government were aided by one of the most revolutionary of all the mechanical inventions that have transformed society during the last century and a half. This was the cotton gin, invented in 1793. This

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

invention multiplied the productive power of the workers in the southern cotton fields from ten to an hundred fold, and enabled the cotton planters to increase their product from 18 million to 93 million pounds, without any decrease in price, during the years 1801 to 1810.

In spite, however, of the great accession of power which accompanied this industrial transformation the South could not have defeated the party of Hamilton had it not been for the frontier. The pioneers of Kentucky and Tennessee felt a sharp antagonism to the New England manufacturers and merchants, who had sought to restrict settlement lest wages might rise too high and the fur trade be disturbed. They had also opposed the sale of land in small parcels that the interests of land speculators might be conserved rather than those of actual settlers, they had laid the tax on moonshine whiskey, and had shown a reluctance to opening up the navigation of the Mississippi.

The southern planter on the other hand was an extensive buyer of the cattle and corn raised on the frontier. A large portion of the settlers had come from Virginia and Carolina and were southern in their sympathies. As a result of this alliance Jefferson, representing the plantation interests, went into power. The frontier was democratic and the southern slave owner, having no fear of political opposition from his enslaved workers, was also willing to talk democracy. This was a period of expansion, and of internal improvements, when the Cumberland road was laid out, Louisiana purchased, the Lewis and Clark expedition sent to the Pacific, steamboat navigation begun, and when a vast army of settlers invaded the forests of the Mississippi valley.

# CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

## THE MARCH OF THE PIONEER

A continually moving frontier has been the most distinctive characteristic of American history and it is just at this period that it began to stamp its impression upon American social institutions. He, who would tell the story of Greece, Italy or England has but to describe the birth, growth, and sometimes decay, of a definite body of people, living on a Mediterranean peninsula or Atlantic island, but the history of the United States is the description of the march of a gigantic army ever moving westward in conquest of forest and prairie.

This army moved in successive battallions. The significant thing about these is that each line of the advancing army reproduced in succession the various stages through which society has passed. To borrow terms from biology, American society has been an ontogenic reproduction of social philogeny. The advance guard of the army, composed of hunters, trappers, fishermen and Indian scouts reproduced with remarkable fidelity the stage of savagery. They used the same crude tools, lived in the same rude shelters, followed the same methods of obtaining a livelihood, gathered around personal leaders, were often lawless, brutal and quarrelsome.

The next battallion on the frontier, and in race evolution, was formed of little groups of settlers along water courses, building semi-communistic neighborhoods, so closely resembling the Germanic "tun" and the Anglo-Saxon village of the age prior to the Norman conquest as to cause some of the foremost of American historians to attempt to trace direct connection.

Next in order came the nomadic stage in history and the cowboy, herder and ranchman on the frontier. Each

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

of these bodies formed a rather large industrial unit nomadic in its character and dependent upon the care of animals for its existence.

Crowding close upon the heels of this stage came that of small individualistic farming with the little merchant, householder, manufacturer and all the characteristics of the early stages of capitalism. The progress from this to the present monopolistic stage belongs in another part of this little work.

Such a frontier has always offered an opportunity to Americans to choose in which of the various historical stages they would live. The unemployed, blacklisted workers of capitalism could move into the individualistic stage or into the little semi-communistic group of settlers on the edge of the forest who would assist him in "raising" his log cabin, and clearing his land preparatory to planting his first crop. Finally, not so many years ago, if all else failed he could shoulder his rifle and revert to the savagery of the forest and plain as a trapper and hunter.

The frontier took the various people who had fled from European oppression and moulded them into the common type of American. Indeed it is only on the frontier that a distinctly American type has been produced and those whom we are proudest to call American and of which Lincoln is the foremost type are pre-eminently the expression of this social stage.

The frontier, although it assisted in the election of Jefferson was really of little importance in national affairs until nearly twenty years later, when, under Jackson, it seized the reins of national power.

# CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

## THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The Napoleonic wars, the war of 1812 with its accompanying embargo, and the tariff which followed it to pay the war debt, all tended to a rapid increase in manufacturing. In New England a very sharp change was taking place. With the return of peace to Europe the commerce of the world readjusted itself. European countries once more assumed their proportionate share of the carrying trade. This released large amounts of capital which found its way into manufacturing. It was partly this process of transition that weakened the capitalist interests of the North and enabled the South and the West to gain control.

During the 25 years that followed the war of 1812 the United States, at least so far as the Atlantic coast was concerned, entered upon that stage of society marked by the factory system. The loom and the spinning wheel deserted the farm for the factory. Iron and steel manufacturing became of considerable importance. Leather manufacturing, ship building, and the textile industries, all flourished.

Nevertheless, when the protective tariff of 1816 was enacted New England was still so completely controlled by the commercial class that her members in congress voted against the tariff, while among those who supported it was John C. Calhoun of South Carolina.

This first phase of the factory system led to widespread speculation both in industrial plants and in western lands and ended in the first industrial crisis, that of 1819.

## THE FIRST LABOR MOVEMENT IN AMERICA

With the coming of the factory came the wage worker, the modern proletariat and also, as inevitably as day fol-

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

lows night, came the beginning of what we now call the labor movement. In the early days of capitalism in America, as in England, no limit was set to the exploiting greed of the possessing class. The cradle and the home were robbed to secure cheap labor power, while even in those factories that were held up as models, the employes toiled from fourteen to sixteen hours a day.

Soon for the first time in America the working class became consciously a factor in determining social and political institutions. Trades unions sprang up in the principle cities of the Atlantic sea-board. Labor papers were published at Rochester, New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Wilmington, New Haven, Binghamton and in many other places. In several of these cities a workingmen's political party was placed in the field, and one man was elected to the New York legislature.

Five industrial classes were at this time struggling for the mastery in America. The *plantation South* in alliance with the *pioneer West* held the reins of power. However, their interests were by no means identical and there were many points of disagreement concerning a political program. In the North the *commerical* class was just giving way to the *manufacturing* class and arrayed against this latter was arising the new social force of the *proletariat*.

Owing to this diversity of class interests the workmen were able to exert a considerable influence in the moulding of institutions. The pioneer and the South were not particularly averse to some democratic institutions, especially the wider extension of the suffrage. The commercial classes of New England, robbed of their function as a ruling class, while still retaining a sufficient wealth to maintain them in leisure were dying out in a

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

blaze of intellectual fireworks. The principal manifestation of this was the great transcendental movement, with Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Channing and Lowell as its most prominent representatives. The social confusion produced by the swift changes of the industrial revolution in the midst of these contending classes led to a corresponding intellectual confusion. It was a time of the origin of "isms", including spiritualism, mesmerism, communism, phrenology and hydropathy, together with most of the freak philosophies that remain even till the present day. These were but the efflorescence of the intellectual growth that gave rise to the greatest accession which American literature has yet received. A literature springing from such industrial conditions could not fail to be more or less rebellious and tinged with the humanitarian aspect, and it is just these characteristics that most accurately describe the work of the writers mentioned. One who reads Thoreau's "Walden," the editorials of Dana, the essays of Emerson, or the poems of Lowell will be surprised to see how great a contribution to the world's literature of revolt is to be found therein.

Into the midst of this storm and stress was born the new labor movement. It demanded universal suffrage, abolition of imprisonment for debt, establishment of a mechanics' lien law, and perhaps most important of all, the extension of public education. Mass meetings of the workers in New York, Boston and Philadelphia placed general education as foremost among the demands of the working class. Every platform of the workingmen's political parties of that time contained a demand for the formation of a public school system and it is as certain as a causal relation ever can be, that to this early labor movement more than to any other one cause we owe the

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

great "educational revival" of the thirties and our common school system of today.

A further examination of their platforms and literature will show that they stood for a long list of progressive measures, hitherto unknown to American institutions.

It is to these early working-class rebels that we owe to a larger degree than to any other cause not only our public school system, but abolition of imprisonment for debt, the mechanic's lien law, freedom of association, universal suffrage, improvement in prison administration, direct election of presidential electors and in fact nearly everything of a democratic character in our present social and political institutions. Yet so far as I know no historian has ever given them the least credit for securing these measures. On the contrary every effort is made to make it appear that these privileges were handed down as gracious gifts by a benevolent bourgeoisie.

For the working class directly they succeeded in shortening hours and improving conditions in many directions. They even brought sufficient pressure to bear upon the national government to compel the enactment of a ten hour law and the abolition of the old legislation against trades unions, which had made labor organizations conspiracies.

The question naturally arises as to why this labor movement disappeared. A variety of causes contributed to this end. On the political side the Loco-Focos, Know Nothings, Free Soilers and finally Tammany and the democratic party under Van Buren, took up enough of the working class demands to enable the politicians to swallow the young political movement of labor. At the same time the humanitarian tendencies of the Transcen-

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

dentalists coupled with the existence of free land led them into a communistic colonist movement which absorbed the energy of some of the workers. This element of free land to the West offered an outlet during the early days of the Republic for discontented elements and prevented any effective social revolution.

Most important of all, the titanic battle between wage and chattel slave owners was just beginning. This contest so absorbed the energies of all classes as to bring about a new social alignment. Finally industrial conditions had not yet reached the stage where it was possible for the wage earning proletariat to become the social ruler. Several more generations of the factory system must come and go before competition should run its course and grow into monopoly and thereby lay the foundations of a social stage where wage workers should confront capitalists in a struggle for supremacy.

### THE MOMENTARY TRIUMPH OF THE FRONTIER

During most of the period that we have just been considering the pioneers who had reached the small farmer stage and were located in Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio and the back country district of New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia were largely in control of the government. Andrew Jackson was the representative of this class and to a large degree carried out their ideas. They attained power only through the assistance of the southern chattel slave owners, by whom they were greatly influenced. In many ways, however, they refused to carry out the measures demanded by their southern allies. This was especially shown in the nullification struggle.

During this entire period manufacturing was rapidly increasing. By its close class lines had taken on a wholly

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

different form. The manufacturing class had gained dominant power in New England, and Webster had changed his mind on the tariff to agree, as he said, with the material interests of his constituents. While the latter were commercial he was a free trader, when they became manufacturing he favored a high tariff. Calhoun in the South had turned a similar political somersault. So long as it was thought that supplies of cotton for the English market might be secured from other countries the southern cotton planter was anxious to be sure of the New England market, and therefore favored a protective tariff. He soon learned, however, that the South was the main source of the world's supply of cotton, and changed his mind in regard to the importance of the New England market, becoming, in consequence, a rabid free trader.

### WAGE VS. CHATTEL SLAVERY

During colonial times the English capitalists found one of their main sources of income in supplying English colonists with slaves. By the treaty of Utrecht in 1713 Great Britain secured the monopoly of the slave trade. This monopoly was controlled by royal favorites and was an important source of income to the crown. Indeed it is not too much to say that the industrial foundations of England and her rapid rise during the 18th century was largely due to this monopoly.

As soon as the raising of slaves became profitable the slave-breeding states began to object to further importation. But the slave trade received support from another quarter. One of the principal industries of Massachusetts and Connecticut was the manufacturing of New England rum from East Indian molasses. This rum was

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

then taken to Africa and after ample admixture with water was exchanged for negroes, who were then sold to the southern planters. The ships proceeding from the southern ports to the West Indies to receive its load of negroes would be taken to the New England distilleries and so on. It was from the profits of this trade that the Puritan fathers of our country received a large portion of their income. Peter Fanueil was one of these traders, and Faneuil Hall, the "cradle of liberty," was built from the profits obtained from smuggling rum and capturing slaves. The first draft of the Declaration of Independence contained the following section:

"He has waged war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred Rights of Life and Liberty in the persons of distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in the transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the Christian King of Great Britain.

"He has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or restrain an execrable commerce, determined to keep open a market where men should be bought and sold."

But it was felt that this was treading on some very tender toes and therefore it was dropped out before the Declaration was adopted. So it was that the writers of a document whose opening sentence declared all men to be created free and equal feared to include a condemnation of the trade in human beings. In a short time, however, powerful forces began to make for abolition in the North. Slavery was found to be unprofitable. The long winters, irregular employment and high skill required in manufactures, and the careful personal attention neces-

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

sary in northern agriculture all contributed to make wage slavery more economical than chattel.

The invention of the cotton gin, on the other hand, had at once made chattel slavery immensely profitable in the South. This was especially true since it came just at a period when the industrial revolution was marvelously increasing the powers of production in the spinning and weaving of cotton, thus creating a demand far in excess of the possibility of the old method of production to supply. For these reasons southern society was soon organized on a basis of chattel slavery.

For the first fifty years of the government it was a generally accepted principle that chattel slavery within state boundaries could not be interfered with by the national government. But new states were constantly being formed, and in the territorial stage these were directly subject to the national government. This caused continuous friction. As each new state was admitted the whole subject of slavery had to be thrashed over again.

This western movement also had an important effect on the industrial organization of the South. With the opening up of the southwest the raising of cotton became even more profitable than it had been upon the sea-board. The Louisiana sugar industry also became a great user of slave labor. The profit from these two industries was so large as to cause the price of slaves to rise with great rapidity, until by 1860 as high as \$4,000.00 had been paid for ordinary field hands. As a consequence of this the southwestern states began to demand the revival of the African slave trade, in which they were opposed by the slave-breeding states of Virginia and Maryland. This constant rise in the price of slaves tended to absorb the profits of the owner until the point had been reached

## CLASS STRUGGLES 'IN AMERICA

where the cost of production by chattel slaves was probably much more expensive than that by wage slavery. An excellent statement of the capitalists' argument on this point is afforded by the following quotation taken from the *London Economist* which was at that time (1853) the leading organ of international capitalism:

"Slaves are costly instruments of production, and the commodities which they raise must be sold to procure their clothing and subsistence. A slave establishment that produces all the commodities it requires, and sends nothing to market, may be independent; but the instant it works for a market, it becomes dependent on that both for its sales and its purchases. As the planter must provide for his population, he must often sell his produce for that purpose. A slave population hampers its owners in more ways than one, and there is some reason to believe that the low price at which slave raised produce is sold, is the consequence of the necessity which the slave owner is under to sell in order to maintain his people. The responsibility of the employer of free labor is at an end when he has paid the covenanted wages; and his greater advantages in dealing with the general market are exemplified in that *there are more fortunes made by the employers of free labor than by slave owners*. The Astors, the Girards, and the Longworthys, are the millionaires of the States, as the Rothschilds, the Lloyds, and the Barings, are the millionaires of the world—not the slave-owners, however wealthy, of Carolina, Cuba or Brazil."

### THE STRUGGLE FOR THE NORTHWEST

In the North also power and industry was moving west. The upper Mississippi valley was becoming of great industrial importance. While this section was still in the small farmer stage it found a profitable market for its productions in the South. Indeed had it not been for the cheap corn and bacon that was raised in the Northwest, and with which the slaves of the South were

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

fed, chattel slavery would have been much less profitable and might easily have been impossible. In obedience to the principle that political action follows economic interests the votes of this section went with the locality which afforded them their most profitable market. Consequently throughout the forties and the early fifties the vote of this section was largely democratic.

Once more a series of inventions and economic changes brought about political transformations. The Erie Canal, finished in 1825, turned the flood of production largely towards New York rather than New Orleans. At the same time it brought in a mass of immigrants from the same locality and from Europe; especially, at a somewhat later date, from Germany. Hitherto immigration to this territory had been largely over the Cumberland road from Virginia or down the Ohio from Maryland and Pennsylvania. The majority of these earlier settlers being either from slaveholding states or near the border had at least no immediate hostility to chattel slavery. But the new army of immigrants that came over the Erie Canal and the railroads from the North Atlantic States and from Europe were, from the beginning, opposed to chattel slavery.

About the same time that the Erie Canal was completed steamboats began to appear upon the western waters enabling produce to go up as well as down the Mississippi and by 1856 the steam tonnage of the Mississippi valley was equal to that of the whole empire of Great Britain. The first steamer on the Great Lakes was in 1819 and by 1851 the lake trade was estimated at over \$311,000,000.

With the coming of railroads the advantages of the Northeast over the South was further increased. The

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

surplus value of wage slavery was so much greater and in so much more convenient form for use as capital as to give the North an overwhelming advantage in the construction of railroads. The South with a class-consciousness such as has been shown by almost no other industrial section in the history of the world set about endeavoring to overcome this movement. Great conventions were held to devise means to improve communication with this territory and most strenuous efforts were made to retain the commercial connections upon which they realized their political strength depended. But in spite of all that could be done the South fell behind, not only in this competition for new territory, but still more strikingly in its own internal development. Chattel slavery with its insatiable demand for great investments of capital in the labor itself, and for more land for exploitation, prevented the growth of manufacturing, even if chattel slavery had been otherwise adaptable to the factory system.

Out of this situation also grew the secondary fight concerning the tariff. In a quotation from one of the books published in the South at this time in support of southern interests under the title of *Cotton is King* we find this position stated as follows:

"The close proximity of the provision and cotton growing districts of the United States gave its planters advantages over all other portions of the world. But they could not monopolize the market unless they could obtain a cheap supply of food and clothing for their negroes and raise their cotton at such reduced prices as to undersell their rivals. A manufacturing population, with its mechanical coadjutors, in the midst of the provision growers, on a scale such as the protective policy contemplated, it was conceived, would create a permanent market for their products and enhance the price, whereas, if their manufacturing

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

could be prevented, and a system of free trade adopted, the South would constitute the principal provision market of the country, and the fertile lands of the North supply the cheap food demanded for its slaves. As the tariff policy in the outset, contemplated the encouragement of rice, hemp, whisky, and the establishment of woollen manufactures principally, the South found its interests but slightly identified with the system.

"If they (the Southern planters) could establish free trade, it would insure the American market to foreign manufacturers, secure the foreign markets for their leading staple, repress home manufactures, force a larger number of the Northern men into agriculture, multiply the growth and diminish the price of provisions, feed and clothe their slaves at lower rates, produce their cotton for a third or fourth of former prices, and rival all other countries in its cultivation, monopolize the trade in that article throughout the whole of Europe, and build up a commerce and a navy that would make us the rulers of the seas."

After the election of Polk in 1844 the southern chattel slave owners had absolute control of the national government until the election of Lincoln. During most of this time the capitalists were not so vitally interested in dominating the national government. With the rapid development of the West new markets were furnished, amounting to a "foreign market" within national boundaries. Many of the capitalist enterprises, especially the building of railroads, canals and steamboat lines did not require a tariff. Moreover the interests of the North were too diversified to permit any unity of action. The commercial classes of New England, still of considerable strength, the manufacturers, the small farmers and the frontiersmen had no set of definite interests uniting them stronger than the various ties possessed by some of them to the South.

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

### RISE OF THE CAPITALIST CLASS

By 1850 a class began to appear, national in scope, compact in organization, definite in its desires and destined soon to seize the reins of political power. This was the capitalist class; not to be sure the monopolized solidified plutocracy of today, but rather the little competitive bourgeoisie that already had overthrown the feudalism of Europe. This class had now reached into the Mississippi valley and turned the currents of trade so that the political and industrial affiliations of that locality began to be with New York and New England. This class found its political expression in the Republican party.

This party naturally arose in the upper Mississippi valley where the old political ties were weakest and the new industrial interests were keenest. The people of this locality felt no such close allegiance to the recently organized states in which they lived, as did the sea-board states. Whether employers, wage workers, or small farmers they all possessed the small capitalist mind, and all hoped, and with infinitely better reason than ever since, to become capitalists. They saw in the unsettled West the opportunity to carve out new cities, locate new industries, build yet longer lines of railroad—in short infinite opportunity to “rise”—the highest ideal of the bourgeois mind.

The Republican party exactly corresponded to these industrial interests. It exaggerated the importance of the national government, opposed further extension of slavery and supported all measures for more rapid settlement and exploitation of the West. The first national convention of the Republican party was held at Pittsburgh, February, 1856. In the address calling this con-

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

vention we find the committee giving as its reasons for existence that:

"The representatives of freedom on the floors of congress have been treated with contumely, if they resist or question the right to supremacy of the slave holding class. The labor and commerce of sections where slavery does not exist obtains tardy and inadequate recognition from the general government..... Thus is the decision of great questions of public policy touching vast interests and vital rights made to turn, not upon the requirements of justice and honor, but upon its relation to the subject of slavery—upon the effect it will have upon the interests of the slave holding class."

Here, and throughout this document which is intended as a justification of the formation of the Republican party the indictment is never of slavery, but always of the South as a ruling section. There is no demand for the abolition of slavery but only for its restriction to existing limits. *The fundamental object is to obtain control of government, that capitalist interests may receive "adequate recognition."* The platform adopted by the convention added a demand for the Pacific railroad, and an appropriation for rivers and harbors.

The vote at this election was small, but it is significant that its greatest strength was directly along the lines of communication running from the upper Mississippi valley to the northeast Atlantic coast. Four years later, however, the Republican party placed in nomination the man, who, more than any other man, typified the best of the capitalist system,—Abraham Lincoln. The finest fruit of the Golden age of American capitalism, he stands as the embodiment of all that is good in that system. "Rising from the people" by virtue of a fierce "struggle for existence" under frontier conditions, where that struggle was freer and fairer than anywhere else in the entire

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

history of capitalism, he incarnates the best of the best days of capitalism. As such he must stand as the greatest American until some higher social stage shall send forth its representative.

In some respects indeed Lincoln seems to have even transcended the class from which he sprang. There were many times in which he seemed to have a glimpse of the coming conflict between capitalists and laborers and to extend his sympathy to the worker. Yet we must not expect too much of him. It has not yet been given to any man to escape from the environment which produced him; had he done so he would have been not a man but a monstrosity—a super-man.

### SECESSION

Once that the capitalist class had wrested the national government from the chattel slave holders there was nothing for them to do but to secede. The margin of profits in chattel slavery was already too narrow to permit its continuance in competition with wage slavery unless the chattel slave owners controlled the national government. The Civil war therefore was simply a contest to secure possession of the "big stick" of the national government. The northern capitalists wanted it to collect tariffs, build railroads, shoot down workers, protect trusts, and, in short, to further the interests of plutocracy. The southern chattel slave owner wanted it to secure free trade, to run down fugitive slaves, to conquer new territory for cotton fields, and to maintain the supremacy of King Cotton.

To say that the Republican party was organized, or the Civil war waged to abolish chattel slavery is but to repeat a tale invented almost a decade after the war was

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

closed, as a means of glorifying the party of plutocracy and maintaining its supremacy. So far was the North from wishing the abolition of slavery at the opening of the Civil war that in December, 1860, after several states had already seceded, a joint resolution was passed by both houses of Congress providing for a constitutional amendment that should prohibit the adoption of any future amendment interfering with slavery within the bounds of any existing state. Neither did the South secede in order to maintain slavery. This is proven by the fact that when the fortunes of war became desperate the confederate cabinet proposed to abolish slavery as a means of gaining European sympathy and retaining their independent position. In the midst of the conflict the negro was changed from a chattel to a wage-slave as an act of war, just as the southern ports were blockaded and southern railroads destroyed.

One direct cause of secession whose importance was carefully suppressed, but which undoubtedly played its part, although not a dominant one, is to be found in the debts owed by southern traders to the North. These debts amounted to something between two hundred and four hundred million dollars. One of the first acts of the seceding states was to promptly repudiate all these debts. This at once brought to the support of the southern confederacy a large number of the little traders who had no direct interest otherwise in the supremacy of the slave holding class.

### THE CIVIL WAR

Once open hostility had begun the actual fighting was carried on as it has been carried on in all wars, at least, since private property began, by those who did the work and had no interest in the outcome. Hinton Rowan

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

Helper, in his work on *The Impending Crisis* which, by the way, had far more to do with bringing on the Civil War than *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, tells us that there were only about 186,000 actual slave holders out of a white population of over six million, and that of these only a very few owned more than five slaves. When the war began, however, the millions of poor whites turned out to fight to help chattel slave owners gain control of the national government in opposition to other millions of wage slaves from the North who were fighting that that same government might be controlled by their capitalist masters.

To the student of industrial history the outcome of the Civil war is plain from the beginning. In military conflict, wage slavery is incomparably superior to chattel slavery. The wage workers with modern machinery produce such enormous quantities of surplus value that the expenses of war are little more than a spur to industry. The development of the transportation system, and indeed the whole industrial and financial situation of the North was of a higher social type, more complex, more effective, in producing results of all kinds than that of the South.

In modern wars, banks are of more importance than bullets, and bonds out-rank bayonets as weapons of offense and defense.

### INDUSTRIAL EFFECTS OF THE WAR

In very many senses the Civil war was the father of modern plutocracy. It was fought that the capitalist class might rule. Its progress laid the foundations and mightily extended the scope of the capitalist system. It is characteristic of war under capitalism that it produces

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

a sort of hot house industrial growth. The tremendous demand for a great number of identical articles built up great industries at the expense of the smaller ones. All industries connected in any way with the manufacture of military supplies grew with leaps and bounds. Of the woolen industries we are told by A. S. Bolles that

"the mills soon found themselves overwhelmed with orders.... a great many of the woolen factories which had been shut up during the previous hard times were reopened and set at work. Hundreds of new factories were built....Cotton mill owners resolved to turn a portion of their establishments to the manufacture of woolen....Every machine was run so as to produce the greatest amount of goods and in many cases the mills were run night and day. It was an era of great prosperity. The woolen machinery of the country was more than doubled during the war."

The Civil war made iron the King of the American industrial world. The war tariff, railroad building, and new inventions all contributed to this supremacy. The slight rise in wages brought about by the employment of vast numbers of men in destructive work caused the number of patents granted to rise to nearly double those of any equal number of previous years.

This was especially evident in agriculture. It has been said that the Civil war was won by the McCormick reaper, and there is more than a grain of truth in the statement. The improved agricultural machines, which could be operated by women and children, made it possible to raise larger crops during the Civil war, when almost a majority of the farmers were in the line of battle, than had ever been raised when all were employed. These great agricultural resources formed the backbone of the northern power.

But while women and children were toiling at home

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

and men were facing the cannon at the front that capitalists might rule, those capitalists, so far from undergoing any privations, were reaping a golden harvest, such as had never fallen to the lot of their class before. Internal revenue taxes were manipulated and their imposition "tipped off" in advance so that on the single item of the whiskey tax over \$50,000,000 were cleared up by the ring who engineered through this deal. The gigantic contracts brought forth a revelry of financial debauchery that makes even modern "Frenzied Finance" look innocent in comparison. A single investigating committee discovered \$17,000,000 worth of graft in \$50,000,000 worth of contracts and from our knowledge of the work of investigating committees we may be pretty sure that there were many items overlooked. Shoddy uniforms, defective carbines, rotten leather, and adulterated rations were sold to the government at prices far above the market rate for perfect goods. Like a horde of vultures northern capitalists fattened upon the life blood of their fighting slaves. When we remember that it was right here that the foundation was laid for perhaps a majority of the great fortunes of today we are once more reminded of that striking statement of Marx's that "If usury comes into the world with a congenital blood stain on each cheek, then capital comes dripping with blood and dirt at every pore."

Although it was of great importance from the strategic point of view that the blockade on southern cotton should be effective, yet when cotton in the south could be bought for less than 10 cents a pound and sold in New England for \$1.00, only a slight knowledge of capitalist economics and their relation to ethics is necessary to make it certain that the blockade would be broken by the very class

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

who were supposed to be interested in its maintenance. It was stated upon the floor of congress that

“We have prolonged the rebellion and strengthened the arms of traders by allowing the very trade, in consequence of which not only union men and women, but rebels of the deepest dye, have been fed and have had their pockets lined with greenbacks, by means of which they could carry on the rebellion. Under the permission to trade, supplies not only have gone in, but bullets and powder, instruments of death, which our heroic soldiers have been compelled to meet upon almost every field of battle, upon which they have been engaged...I am greatly afraid that in some quarters the movements of our armies have been conducted more with a view to carry on trade than to strike down the rebels.”

Of equal importance with the mechanical development in building up a strong plutocratic class was the growth of a financial system, made necessary by the great transactions of the Civil war. It is estimated that the total expenditure of the war was over six billions of dollars. The floating of this debt had not only greatly enriched the little clique of bankers having charge of the national finances, but more important still it had trained a large body of men in that “high finance” which was to play so great a part in later industrial developments. It is noteworthy that the present system of national banks was established at the end of February, 1863.

A glance at the south during the war but adds further proof to the superiority of wage labor as a means of exploitation. In a short time the rails of the street railroad of Richmond were taken up to make armour for a gunboat, while the worn-out plows, old spades, axes and broken stoves were being gathered up from the plantations to be made into weapons of war. The railroad system soon ceased to be worthy of the name, while

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

the postal system was forced to charge rates which constituted a crushing burden upon communication. The south being a one crop country depended upon foreign trade for its existence. The moment the blockade was made even partially effective its industrial life was paralyzed.

The military campaigns were arranged with reference to industrial features. When Grant had occupied the Mississippi valley and gained control of this great artery of internal communication he had cut off the Confederacy from the great granary state of Texas and paralyzed one of the principal nerves of its system of communication. Sherman's march to the sea, with its terrible devastation of agricultural resources and what few manufactures existed along his route, completed the process of destroying the already backward stage of industry which prevailed in the south.

### WORKINGMEN DURING THE WAR

While on the whole the laboring class showed little signs of intelligent consciousness or recognition of their own interest, but rather acted blindly in obedience to their masters' behests, yet there were a few exceptions.

The only labor organization of any importance at this time was the National Labor Union of which William H. Sylvis was the head. In his biography, written by his brother, we learn that,

"Among the working men a few choice spirits north and south, knowing that all burdens and none of the honors of war, are entailed upon labor, were engaged in an effort to frustrate the plans of those who seemed to desire, and whose fanaticism was calculated to precipitate hostilities."

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

These men held numerous meetings both north and south and had arranged for a great convention to be held at Philadelphia, Feb. 22, 1861, but by that time the war was already on and the convention was insignificant.

The only other sign of working class opposition to the war was the uprising against the "exemption clause" of the draft, which enabled the wealthy to escape from military service. This antagonism reached such a stage that during the New York draft riots of 1863 the city was for several days in the hands of a mob. It should be noted in this connection, however, that since American industrial society had not yet reached the stage where working class supremacy was possible this blind devotion to their master's interests was really working in accord with social progress.

### RECONSTRUCTION

A southern writer described the condition in the South at the close of the Civil war in the following words:

"The people were generally impoverished; the farms had gone to waste, the fences having been destroyed by the armies, or having decayed from neglect; the fields were covered with weeds and bushes; farm implements and tools were gone; live-stock had disappeared, so that there was barely enough farm animals to meet the demands of agriculture; business was at a standstill; banks and commercial agencies had either suspended or closed on account of insolvency; the currency was in a wretched condition; the disbanded Confederate soldiers returned to their homes to find desolation and starvation staring them in the face; there was no railway or postal system worth speaking of; only here and there was a newspaper running; the labor-system in vogue since the establishment of the colonies was completely overturned,....worse than all this was the fact that about one-third of the white bread-winners of the state had either been sacrificed in the contest or were disabled for life, so that they

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

could no longer be considered as factors in the work of economic organization...."

Such a situation means that nearly all the physical achievements of a century of progress had been wiped out and that society had returned to a primitive stage accompanied by a mass of handicaps such as never afflicted the early frontiersmen of the forest and prairie. Out of this chaos was to come, as the first coherent social stage, that of small farming and manufacturing,—of the small bourgeoisie. If this class was to arise it was necessary that the negro be transformed into a wage slave. This, however, could not be accomplished in a moment. Indeed it has scarcely been satisfactorily accomplished in half a century. But if the negro was to yield profits he must somehow be forced to work for a master. In order to secure this end the southern states enacted the famous "vagrancy laws." These laws provided that any person without regular employment, or "caught loitering" might be arrested, fined and bound out to someone to work out the fine. One of the interesting features of these laws is that they were copied almost verbatim from the statute books of New England, where, to be sure, they were directed only against poor white wage slaves.

Of course, these laws had the obvious intention of reducing the negro to a state closely approximating that of chattel slavery, yet the spasm of "moral indignation" which passed through the North and which resulted in such momentous action, had far different reasons back of it than that highly tender Puritan conscience which has served as an excuse for so many things in American history. In order to understand this we must turn for a moment to the northern states.

# CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

## THE RISE OF PLUTOCRACY TO POWER

Within the capitalist class of the north an important division had taken place. As the war had gone on the small competitive capitalists of whom Lincoln was the representative had been gradually crowded to the background. A race of plutocratic giants had arisen. The kings of iron and steel, of banks and bonds, and railroads were now marching toward the national capital over the prostrate forms of their weaker fellow exploiters. During the closing years of the Civil war the beginning of this division of interests had appeared, yet in those stirring times no opportunity had developed for its clear expression. Now that the war was over a new allignment of political forces became imperative to correspond to the industrial allignment. The great corporations, whom Lincoln had foreseen would arise as a result of the war, and whose power he feared, now began to make themselves felt. They were still too few in numbers to hope to directly control national elections if the fight between them and the smaller capitalists became an open one.

A little capitalist class was rapidly arising within the South. It would have interests in common with the members of the same class in the northern Mississippi valley. The formation of an alliance between these two forces meant that the control of government would fall once more into the hands of the small profit takers. Such an alliance must be prevented at all hazards. So it was that Thaddeus Stevens, a Pennsylvania iron master, who best incarnated the spirit of plutocracy, arose in his seat in the house and declared that the southern states "ought never to be recognized as valid states. until the consti-

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

tution shall have been so amended . . . as to secure the *perpetual ascendancy of the party of the union*." It is probably unnecessary to add that when Thaddeus Stevens said the "party of the union" he always meant the plutocratic wing of the Republican party.

The method by which this was done is interesting. Remember that a large percentage of the southern states had already been reorganized under the direction of Lincoln, had state governments in active operation, had accepted the Emancipation Proclamation, and the thirteenth amendment, had elected their representatives to Congress, and, in short, in every meaning of the constitution, were fully equipped states with all the rights, privileges, and duties of any state.

This was the situation when Congress met in 1867. Then began a series of violent illegal subversions of fundamental institutions, such as the French designate as *coups d'etat*, and which our historians always congratulate us on having avoided. In the first place the house was called to order and the clerk was instructed to disregard the laws providing for the regular method of calling the roll and to omit from his roll all those states whom Thaddeus Stevens and his followers did not desire to be represented, and this notwithstanding the fact that their representatives were on the floor of the house ready to be sworn in.

This having been done a joint committee of fifteen was appointed, with Thaddeus Stevens as chairman, to have charge of the work of reconstruction. On March 2, 1867, this committee reported a plan to the house, providing for a form of government utterly foreign to our constitution and having no foundation in any legal institution then existing. This act divided the South, with-

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

out regard to state boundaries, into five military districts and placed them under the command of five general officers of the army. Three weeks later a supplemental act was passed annulling all state governments then in operation, enfranchising the negroes, disfranchising all who had participated in the war against the union, whether pardoned or not, if they had previously held any offices (thus abolishing the President's constitutional power of pardon) and granting to these military officers absolute power over life, liberty and property, with the sole exception that death sentences required the approval of the President before going into effect.

Thus we see that the capitalist class first came into power in this country through the bloodiest war of the century and that the present plutocratic wing of that class attained its ruling position through a series of violent revolutionary measures. Yet this is the class which is thrown into a spasm of moral horror at the suggestion of revolutionary action on the part of its wage slaves.

### NEGRO ENFRANCHISEMENT

One of the fundamental planks of this reconstruction act was the granting of the ballot to the negro. For more than two generations the Republican party has lived mainly on the glory of two acts,—negro emancipation and negro enfranchisement. According to the orthodox historian these two acts were conferred upon the negro by the Republican party in obedience to the mandates of its tender conscience. It is rather rough on the conscience theory to note that the solid Republican states of Connecticut, Ohio, Kansas and Minnesota in the years between 1865 and 1867 defeated by referendum votes measures granting the suffrage to the negroes residing

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

in those states. It is also illustrative of this moral conscience theory to note that the vagrancy laws which were offered as the fundamental reason for enactment have recently been re-enacted in the South simultaneously with the disfranchisement of the negroes and no protest has arisen from those same tender consciences. Would it be impertinent to ask if these events are in any way explained by the fact that in 1867 northern plutocracy needed the southern negro vote and that by 1905 its ruling position was so firm that it could afford to forget his suffering?

During the years 1868 to '76 the northern plutocracy had very definite use for the negro vote in order to make certain that the small capitalist and farmer of the South should not join with the same classes in the North and recapture the government. The control of the negro vote was partly secured through the Freedman's Bureau which was established, ostensibly for the protection of the negro but which was so manipulated as to make him the political slave of a gang of officials who went down from the North (the notorious "carpet baggers") and by whom the negroes were trained to use their ballots for the benefit of a new set of masters as they had used their muscles to pile up profits for their former owners.

While this was going on the South was plundered as though by a horde of Goths and Vandals. I take the following account from Woodrow Wilson's "A History of the American People." Since he is a northern historian, recognized as the best authority on this special period, he can not be accused of bias against those who carried out reconstruction:

"In Mississippi, before the work of the carpet baggers was done, six hundred and forty thousand acres of land had been

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

forfeited for taxes, twenty per cent of the total acreage of the State. The state tax levy for 1871 was four times as great as the levy for 1869 had been; that for 1873 eight times as great; that for 1874 fourteen times. The impoverished planters, could not carry the intolerable burden of taxes, and gave their lands up to be sold by the sheriff. There were few who could buy. The lands lay waste and neglected or were parcelled out at nominal rates among the negroes. In South Carolina the taxes of 1871 aggregated \$2,000,000 as against a total of \$4,000,000 in 1860, though the taxable value of the state was but \$184,000,000 in 1871 and had been \$490,000,000 in 1860. There were soon lands to be had for the asking wherever the tax gatherer of the new governments had pressed his claims. The assessed valuation of property in the city of New Orleans sank, during the eight years of carpet-bag rule, from \$146,718,790 to \$88,613,930. Four years and a half of 'reconstruction' cost Louisiana \$106,020,337."

But the story of the increase of taxation is but one small side of the case. State debts were increased to the highest possible amount. In the four years following 1868 the debt of South Carolina rose from five to thirty million dollars, and that of Louisiana from six to fifty million. Along with this wholesale plunder went a practical paralysis of governmental institutions. Towards the close of this period the negroes began to show signs of disregarding their masters and of utilizing the power of plunder which their ballots gave them for their own benefit. This may account to some extent for the fact that no effective opposition was offered to the work of the Ku-Klux-Klans, which violently overthrew the reconstruction governments. Another reason why less opposition was offered by the plutocracy is found in the fact already noticed that by the middle of the seventies the great capitalists were so firmly intrenched that their dislodgment was practically impossible and they conse

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

quently began to be in favor of "law and order," even though this law and order was secured by a violent upsetting of governmental institutions in the South. So it was that as soon as the Klu-Klux-Klan actually became dominant and its directors were recognized as believing faithfully in the sacred god of profits, then President Hayes withdrew the troops from the South and reconstruction was completed.

### THE GROWTH OF THE GREAT INDUSTRY

By this time the general features of society as we know it had begun to appear. For twenty years after the Civil War they were still only in embryo. These years may be designated as the period of the growth of the "great industry" in distinction from the "little business" which preceded the war, and the monopolistic trusts which now dominate the industrial situation. The Civil War had brought forth industrial units of tremendous size compared with those of a generation before. Yet these industries were still competitive; indeed they were even more fiercely competitive than the smaller ones from amid which they had sprung. The field of battle over which they struggled had now become national. This extension of the market was indeed one of the most striking phenomena of this period. Over 30,000 miles of railroad were laid in the United States between 1865 and 1873. These reached from the Atlantic to the Pacific and grid-ironed every portion of the country with means of quick effective communication. This meant the existence of a national market for all but the most bulky and perishable of products. There were many firms which had grown up during the Civil War which were capable of supplying such a national market. In every

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

line of industry these firms now began a fierce struggle for survival. Three great industries leaped into dominant positions during this period. These were iron and steel, coal and the packing industry. The invention of Bessemer steel and the refrigerator car were largely responsible for the rise of two of these industries.

During all this time moreover the government was absolutely in the hands of the Republican party and of the plutocratic wing of that party. The Democratic party was too weak to offer even effective criticism, to say nothing of opposition, consequently the government was used for the benefit of the ruling class in a most shameless manner. The "Whiskey Ring" and Credit Mobilier were but incidents, not by any means the worst among a host of notorious and barefaced steals on a national scale which took place at this time.

But such petty direct grafting is never the fundamental purpose of capitalistic control of government. It is rather to use the government for the direct furtherance of the interests of the capitalist class as such. The tariff was therefore raised for purposes of protection even above the point where the exigencies of war taxation had placed it. To extend the national market by the great system of railroads described above, an empire of land larger by five times than the entire state of Ohio was presented to the men who owned the stock in these proposed lines. To make these railroads even more profitable and to still further extend the market, every effort was made to hasten the settlement of the western states.

All this expansion, however much of profit it brought to the large capitalists, could not avoid raising up a new army of small middle class property owners and these soon began to show signs of class-conscious solidarity,

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

and to express this on the political field. During the years immediately following the Civil War the small capitalist interests attempted to crystallize around Andrew Johnson, who was in the highest degree representative of their class interest. Although it is now universally agreed that he was carrying out President Lincoln's plan for reconstruction, though to be sure with none of Lincoln's tact and ability, yet the corporate control of the press and the other organs of public opinion succeeded in arousing indignation against him until he came to be generally considered as a traitor.

This movement reached its height in the attempt to remove him by impeachment. There is probably not a constitutional lawyer to-day who will claim that the process had the slightest justification on constitutional grounds. His opponents did, however, succeed in so completely disgracing him in the public mind that his following disintegrated. By 1872 the interests which he represented had begun once more to crystalize and in that year the Horace Greeley ticket was thoroughly representative of little capitalistic interests, but the disfranchisement of the South enabled the plutocracy to re-elect Grant and maintain their domination.

### THE RISE OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT

The Civil War marked the close of struggles between anything like equal divisions of the exploiting class in the United States. While for the next generation or two there would be spasmodic attempts on the part of different divisions of the exploiters to grasp the reins, yet the position of the capitalistic class as a whole was never threatened. Indeed we might go further and say that never since the days of Reconstruction was the pluto-

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

cratic wing of that class in any serious danger of losing its dominant position.

But now a new force appears upon the scene. Chattel slavery had disappeared and wage slavery was here. A national market began to exist, not only for iron and steel and pork, but for *labor power*, that strange peculiarly capitalistic commodity, whose very existence is so pregnant with revolutionary power. It was no longer necessary to invest several thousand dollars of capital in the bodies of laborers in order to establish a great industry. The buyer of labor power did not need to visit a slave auction, or employ skilled buyers to search the markets of the slave breeding states in order to secure the muscle and brain he needed in the production of profits. If a thousand or five thousand, or a hundred thousand men were wanted to build and operate a trans-continental railroad, found a packing industry, build a city, or dig a canal, it was only necessary to let the fact be known through the columns of the daily press and the possessors of this new labor power commodity hastened to the designated spot over the highways or clinging to the brake bars of freight trains, carrying with them the strength of their muscles and the skill of their brains. When they arrived at the spot where they were wanted they found no long line of masters to bid for their bodies, but on the other hand the workers themselves engaged in a sort of "Dutch auction" where the lowest bidder took the job.

Such a condition bringing thousands of men together to work for the same master was sure to arouse within the ranks of the workers a feeling of common interest, the germs of class consciousness. This feeling was to grow and develop until a new and more far reaching

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

class struggle than any the world had ever known before was to take place on this continent.

In the beginning this class consciousness expressed itself only in the form of organizations to secure a little higher price for the labor power to be sold. So it was that the four years immediately following the Civil War were years of the beginning of the present labor unions. Thousands of such organizations were formed in every part of the country and these finally joined together in 1866 in the National Labor Union. This organization grew in membership and influence until in 1869 it reported a membership of 168,000. Aside from a few rather small strikes its activity was largely devoted to agitation for a national eight hour day. In this it was assisted by many humanitarians and reformers. As a result Congress passed a law in 1867 providing for the eight hour day for employes of the national government. This was the first and almost the last important gain ever made by the labor movement through the lobbying method and was only possible because of the confusion of class interests which still prevailed.

In 1870 the National Labor Union became a political party with a platform demanding almost everything from "the maintenance of a protective tariff as long as it should be necessary" to "the disenthralment of labor" and political application of the golden rule. Such a party could not have any long life and indeed it died almost as soon as born.

## THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE

About the time that America was discovered, as we have already seen, the capitalist class gained control in Europe. During the next century or two, art, literature

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

and music were "capitalized." This period, commonly known as the Renaissance, was, we will not say, duplicated, but rather burlesqued by the capitalist class of America. It was to its European counterpart, what the revolution of '48 was to the great French revolution, a comparison which Marx has so excellently developed in his *Eighteenth Brumaire*. In both cases it marked the reduction of all forms of art to the commodity basis. In America it was the time when the American millionaire first became the laughing stock of the world, the synonym for the parvenu and the up-start. It was the age in which sculpture found expression in bronze dogs on millionaires' lawns, when architecture expressed itself in the "Queen Anne fronts and Mary Ann backs" of the homes of the kings of pork and iron. It was the age when Mary Jane Holmes and the "Duchess" ruled in literature, while the American millionaire's contribution to the pictorial art of the world was the invention and popularization of the chromo.

### PANIC OF 1873

In less than ten years after the Civil War the marvelous new tools that had been invented and the powers of nature that had been conquered showed themselves capable of producing far more than either their owner could waste or their users, with their wage slave remuneration, could buy, and industries broke down in the first really great capitalistic crisis of 1873. As yet the large capitalists had not reached a size sufficient to elevate them above the catastrophes of their industrial system, so all went down together in a common smash.

When the financial storm had passed the industrial face of society was transformed; a new method of organiza-

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

tion had entered industry, as potent both as a saver of labor and a hastener of the process of production, as the machine in the mechanical world. This was the corporation, which had hitherto been almost entirely confined to the fields of transportation and banking, but which now began to be utilized in all fields of industry. The corporation brings with it, as does every new invention in the industrial field, important social changes. It marks the disappearance of the capitalist as an active participant in the productive process. He no longer directs the process in the shop or in any way fulfills a function as a captain of industry. He has found, in the corporation, a new machine, a legal creation, having no body to scourge, no soul to damn, no life to lose. This machine, like its mechanical counterpart, he does not himself operate, but simply retains the ownership. Henceforth the manager and director of industry, like the man who handles shovel, hammer, loom or lever, is a wage slave, forced to sell himself to the owner of this new industrial and financial tool. The capitalist henceforth becomes purely a parasitic owner, who may be an idiot, an infant, an insane person, a ward of the court, but who, while the law protects his ownership of corporation shares, can still levy a tax upon every man working either with hand or with brain.

### THE STRIKE OF 1877

The first effect of the panic, as always, was felt in the decline of wages. The few small labor unions that had existed were soon swept away. Their members joined the army of unemployed which for the first time appeared in great numbers in the streets of American cities. Those who remained at work found that this army standing idle

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

at the shop gates was a more powerful weapon with which to crush labor than any military forces that their masters might have gathered to confront them. Month by month the pittance paid for labor power grew smaller and smaller until when in 1876 the centennial of the Declaration of Independence was celebrated, it saw the working class of America in a condition of servitude far more pitiable than that ever endured by the colonists beneath the tyranny of King George. As business began to revive the masters saw only the possibility of a greater increase of profits and continued to cut wages. Soon an attitude of desperate, blind revolt began to prevail among the workers. This reached its climax when Tom Scott, the President of the Pennsylvania Railroad, announced a ten per cent horizontal cut in the already starvation wages of the employes of that company. As other railroads announced their intention of making a similar cut the demand for a strike spread over the entire country. Yet there was no organization able to call a strike; there was no method by which to express any general revolt. So it was that the day for the reduction came and went and found the workers apparently bending in resignation beneath this final blow.

But on the 16th of July, 1877, a railroad train rolled into Martinsburg, W. Va., and as it stopped the train crew stepped from their places announcing that as for them they had decided it were better to starve in idleness than add to hunger and privation the added pain of labor. As they walked out through the yards they were joined by the other workers and within three days the strike had spread over the entire system, had reached Pittsburg, New York, and Philadelphia, and had paralyzed the transportation system of the East. A few days

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

later the wave of revolt swept over the Alleghenies, and extended into other branches of industry until something very like a general strike prevailed throughout the United States. Everywhere the mills, mines, factories and railroads stood still.

Then it was, however, that the workers were forced to realize for the first time why the Civil War had been fought and for what purposes their masters desired the powers of government. Then for the first time in the streets of American cities was heard the crack of the militia rifle in civil war between capital and labor. In the cities of Pittsburg and Baltimore the battle was for some time by no means one sided. The militia were often overcome and the workers gained momentary mastery. But the laborers had no plan of action, nor any coherent idea of what to do and consequently were unable to use their victory when gained. Soon new reinforcements were brought up by the capitalists and the strike went down in bloody defeat. This struggle, however, showed the need of organization. Everywhere it was felt that had the workers been united, had they acted with intelligence, they might easily have won. We know to-day that the very unripeness which kept them unorganized would also have prevented any effective victory, and that success of the workers at this time might indeed well have proved an obstacle to progress. How well they learned their lesson of the need of organization is shown by the events of the next few years.

### THE RISE OF THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR

The meteoric career of this organization has had few, if any parallels in the history of the labor movement of

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

the world. For the first ten years after its founding in 1869 it barely existed, shrouding its proceedings in deep-secrecy, and concealing even its name from all outsiders. In the later years of this decade, with the increased growth of membership, this secrecy began to be dropped. In 1885, however, the membership had only reached one hundred thousand, but with the up-shoot of industry which was at its height during that and the following year, preceding the depression of 1887 and '88, and assisted by the great eight hour agitation of those years, the membership gained nearly 700,000, during the single year 1886.

It was the eight hour agitation which was primarily responsible for this movement. There had grown up something almost like an eight hour religion which had set its Millennial Dawn for May 1st, 1886. This movement reached a height which is hard to understand by those whose memory does not reach back to that time. Public meetings, propaganda pamphlets, newspaper and magazine articles all were preaching the necessity of a great general uprising of labor in support of the demand for shorter hours. To be sure the K. of L. officially disavowed any intention of lending support, but in spite of itself it was swept into the general movement. Strikes took place all over the country. Business was well nigh suspended, and once more, as in 1877, the country took on much the aspect of a general strike. In the midst of this excitement some fool, fanatic, or police spy, hurled a bomb on Haymarket Square in Chicago. The bourgeois mind, which had been thrown into something like a panic by the prospect of even the trifling diminution in their profits which the eight hour movement portended, saw its opportunity. All the forces of public opinion,

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

a prostituted press and a bought judiciary were hurled against the remnants of the eight hour movement, and it died a miserable death on the scaffold of Cook County Jail.

The industrial boom, the eight hour craze and the Knights of Labor went down together. Moreover the organization had itself become the prey of that most destructive of all beasts of prey—the labor fakir.

The Richmond convention of '86 appropriated nearly half a million of dollars out of the common treasury. It raised the salary of all the officers and in fact tossed out the treasury surplus to the crowd of hungry wolves that were crying for plunder. From this time on the story of the Knights is but a story of sickness and death. Their demise was hastened by the fierce fight that was being made upon them by a new organization that had just arisen with the grandiloquent name of "Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada" and which we now know as "The American Federation of Labor." This organization had had a moribund existence since 1881. While we are told by the official histories of the organization that "107 delegates representing nearly one-fourth of a million men" met at Pittsburg in that year to form this organization, the truth is, that all but 43 of these delegates lived at Pittsburg, and that only three international bodies were represented; while the most liberal estimate based on the financial receipts, which amount to \$445.31 during the first year of its existence, show that the actual membership was somewhere between 25,000 and 35,000 members. There was very little growth in the organization until 1887 when the K. of L. having started downward, the new organization rose upon the

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

rains. In this year its credential committee reports a membership of 600,000, but the financial committee reports dues from only 150,000. The real membership probably was something above the latter figure, but far below the former. Since then it has steadily grown up to the present time when the unions affiliated with it have a membership of something like one million and a half, or two million.

### THE AGRARIAN REVOLT

While the forces of labor were being thus drawn closer together on the economic field and the lines were growing sharper in the great battle between exploiter and exploited, a last desperate attempt was made by the class of small farmers to enter the political arena. Following the panic of 1873 we have seen that the Greenback movement arose, representing to some degree the farming and debtor class. Another movement which appeared simultaneously with this and which was pregnant with tremendous possibilities was the "Patrons of Husbandry," commonly known as the "Grange." This organization maintained a bare existence from its nominal formation in 1868 until the time of the panic of 1873, when in that single year over eight thousand new organizations were founded to be followed by 11,941 in 1874, giving the Grange of that year a membership of between 700,000 and 800,000, with an annual income of almost \$350,000.00. This movement soon found its political expression in parties of various names which succeeded in capturing several states and in enacting legislation restricting railroad rates, and otherwise voicing the demands of the farmer and small capitalist class. This

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

legislation, however, brought forth practically no results, and was soon repealed.

Ten years later another farmer organization, the Alliance, had arisen to a strength almost equal to that of the Grange. This movement ended in the formation of the Populist party, whose campaign may be looked upon as the last great stand of the frontier. Holding the same principles that we have seen the debtor class on the border of advancing society hold since the days of Shays' rebellion,—because of the fact that the last migration that filled up the great plains was larger than any other—it was enabled to obtain a strength such as was given to no previous stand of the debtor class on American soil. In 1892 their vote for President reached the high water mark of 1,550,424.

### THE LITTLE CAPITALISTS' FINAL FIGHT

The Populist movement was followed by and became a part of another movement representing a class now doomed to disappear as a decisive factor in American politics, but which for a generation had been struggling for the mastery. This was the little competitive employing class together with the small shop keeper and farmer. The tremendous concentration of industry which had taken place since 1890 had crowded this class to the verge of desperation.

The panic of 1893 was almost exclusively a panic of the small capitalist class. In 1873 the average capitalization of the firms failing was \$44,000.00. Twenty years later with the average industrial unit probably three times as large, the average capitalization of the firms failing during the panic of that year was less than \$25,000.00, while during the whole five years from 1893 to '97 there were only 86 failures involving over \$500,000.00 capital.

These desperate little capitalists, allied with the railroad and mortgage ridden farmers of the Grange and

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

Alliance, and financed to some degree by the silver mine owners, rallied around the flag of free coinage of silver under Bryan in the campaigns of '96 and 1900. We have in this campaign a confused combination of the cries of woe of all these various classes. Free coinage of silver was supposed to meet the pioneer and debtor class demand for depreciation of currency, while at the same time it brought in promise of rich returns to the silver mine owner. The campaign against trusts was expected to carry a healing balm to the little exploiters of labor who were being crushed out by the giant trusts.

### LATER STAGES IN CONCENTRATION

But the powers of plutocracy had grown too great to be endangered by any class standing upon the foundation of private property, exploitation and the wage system. During the last half century the process of eliminating the small capitalist had gone steadily onward. This was shown not alone in the fact that the size of the average unit of industry had increased. This might have indicated simply that great businesses were growing up along side the smaller ones. But a table published in the volume on "Manufactures" of the United States census of 1900 shows that this movement really meant the swallowing of the less by the greater. This table, showing the number of establishments in the thirteen leading industries in the United States by decades between 1850 and 1900 is eloquent with the story of the disappearing middle class:

#### NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS.

	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
Agricultural Implements..	1333	2116	2076	1943	910	714
Carpets and Rugs.....	116	213	215	195	173	133
Cotton Goods .....	1094	1091	956	1005	905	1055
Glass .....	94	112	201	211	294	355
Hosiery and Knit Goods..	85	197	248	359	796	921
Iron and Steel.....	468	542	726	699	699	668
Leather .....	6686	5188	7569	5628	1787	1306
Paper and Wood Pulp....	443	555	677	742	649	761
Shipbuilding .....	953	675	964	2188	1006	1116
Silk and Silk Goods.....	67	139	86	382	472	483
Slaughtering & Meat P'kg.	185	259	768	872	1367	1134
Woolen Goods .....	1559	1260	2891	1990	1311	1035
Malt Liquors .....	431	1269	1972	2191	1248	1509
Totals .....	13,514	13,616	19,349	18,405	11,617	11,193

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

He who can read the language of figures will find in this table much of the industrial, and therefore the social and political, history of the last half century of the United States. He will note that by 1870 sufficient plants were in existence to supply the industrial needs of a market restricted by the wage system. Indeed it appears that there was a surplus of such plants, since the thirty years that have followed, and which have seen our population increase nearly fifty per cent, and the territory occupied well nigh double, as the western states have been filled up and the older states more thoroughly exploited, have seen less and less plants required in almost every great industry. This means that for a generation the opportunity to pass from the working class to the capitalistic class has practically disappeared, and that the movement has, on the contrary, been proceeding in the other direction and that thousands of the smaller capitalists have been forced into the ranks of the workers.

This table, however, really presents but a small portion of the truth. Methods of modern high finance,—the organization of “purchasing companies,” the control of “dominating industries” have really centralized property far beyond the point shown by these figures. A new force has entered into American industries in the organization of the trust which marks the disappearance of competition as the ruling industrial force and thereby points the passing of the so-called competitive system. So far has this process of trustification gone that a careful examination of the figures presented by John Moody in his work *The Truth About the Trusts* compared with development since that was written would seem to make it evident that at least thirty billions of dollars of the wealth of America have passed out of the competitive system into the control of a score or more of individuals.

Some idea of the power wielded by this body of men is gained when we remember that at the outbreak of the Civil War the total assessed value of the United States was but eighteen billion dollars. Had this handful of men now controlling the wealth of America been alive

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

and possessing the same financial resources which they now control they could have bought all that lies between the Atlantic and the Pacific, between the Canadian border and the Gulf of Mexico,—all the farms, and all the cities, all the churches, schools, and universities, all the southern plantations and all the chattel slaves upon them; and when this was done they would still have had sufficient capital to have gone to Europe and purchased a half dozen European monarchies as toys for their children.

This overwhelmingly powerful plutocracy now dominates every field of social control. The United States government has long ago become, in the words of *The Communist Manifesto*, a “committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.” The United States Senate is little more than a directorate of consolidated capital. The press, platform and university are largely but tools to formulate and maintain the public opinion essential to the permanence of this plutocracy.

### THE LAST CLASS STRUGGLE

Against this tremendous power but one force is capable of maintaining an effective fight. This force is, like plutocracy, the creation of the great industrial age of to-day. This is the working class. We have seen them slowly gathering strength, solidarity and intelligence, blindly groping for better methods of organization, going down to apparently hopeless defeats before militia rifles and plutocratically dominated judiciaries, but like the fabled giant Anteus they are crushed to earth only to receive new strength and new energy for further fighting. Steadily the idea has grown among them that their fight must be transferred from the brute test of physical and financial strength on the economic field, to the political arena. Here the evolution of industry, the development of events that cast their shadows before have written a platform upon which the working class must stand. That platform sees in the consolidation of ownership, in the organization of industries, in the trusts, in the con-

## CLASS STRUGGLES IN AMERICA

centration of wealth with its merciless inevitable onward movement, but a preparation for collective ownership and control. It sees in the ever recurring panics the death pangs of an old society, and in the ever growing solidarity of labor and capital with strikes, boycotts, lock outs, and injunctions, but the birth pangs of a new society in which for the first time in the world, the workers shall rule, and all shall be workers, and thereby rulership and slavery shall pass from off the earth.

Farmers learning at last the lesson of their helplessness and isolation, together with the inadequacy of their previous demands, are joining hands with the wage-workers where they find the strength that means victory for both; the program that means freedom for all.

In this great struggle we are now engaged there can be but one outcome. Previous class struggles in America have ever been waged in the interest of a minority, but that minority in the Revolution, in the formation of the Constitution, in the Civil War, in Reconstruction, always represented the forces of social progress. Therefore it was compact, consolidated and was able to secure the support of the workers for their fighting. To-day it is the working class which represents social progress, and which embraces all that is essential within our industrial process. Moreover it is they who have done the fighting in all other wars, and who must now fight for themselves; and whereas in previous struggles the class that represented social progress was a minority depending upon the worker for support in its battle, the working class is to-day in an overwhelming majority and has but to make plain the facts of history to its membership to be assured of victory,

1894

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN SENATE

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

1894

# *The* COLLAPSE of CAPITALISM

By HERMAN CAHN

*First edition sold out in sixty days new edition (4th thousand) now ready*

IS capitalism going to collapse? According to the author of this book, a new contradiction in the capitalist system has arisen which threatens the solvency of every bank and every government. This contradiction was evident before the outbreak of the world war, but war conditions have rendered it more acute, and another year of war may bring things to the breaking point.

In Germany the bank deposits have increased out of all proportion to the gold in which they are supposed to be redeemable, so that Germany is already insolvent, and it looks as if the other capitalist countries were on the same road. The whole structure of modern capitalism may soon collapse beyond hope of reconstruction.

Then will come the day of the worker that Mr. Schwab tells us is on the way, the day when the "men who possess no property and who work with their hands are going to control the affairs of this world."

Events are on the way that will rock this old earth of ours. Read this book and understand them; then you will be ready to join the class-conscious workers in rebuilding out of chaos.

Cloth-bound, 50 cents postpaid.

CHARLES H. KERR & COMPANY

341-349 E. Ohio St.

CHICAGO

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY



**3 1197 21442 9224**

